

Message Text

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HEREWITH FULL TEXT CHALMERS M. ROBERTS COLUMN WASHPOST -
DECEMBER 20, 1973:

SEN. HENRY M. JACKSON, THE WASHINGTON STATE DEMOCRAT
AND WOULD-BE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE OF HIS PARTY, CURRENTLY
APPEARS TO HAVE ECLIPSED EVEN SEN. EDWARD M. KENNEDY AS THE
MAN-MOST-OFTEN-ON-THE-AIR ON THE WHOLE RANGE OF CURRENT
ISSUES AND PROBLEMS. "SCOOP" WAS THERE EARLY ON MILITARY
MATTERS, SUPPORT OF ISRAEL, THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY AND
NOW HE IS CASHING IN ON ALL THE HARD WORK AND POSITIVE
POSITION-TAKING. HE IS, IN SHORT, A MAN LISTENED TO AND A
MAN TO BE LISTENED TO, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER OR NOT ONE
AGREES.

THE OTHER DAY JACKSON LET LOOSE A BLAST AT THE AMERI-
CAN POSITION IN THE STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATION TALKS (SALT)
THAT IS WORTHY OF NOTE. HE SAID THAT THE SALT TALKS HAVE
REACHED "AN IMPASSE" IN PART, AT LEAST, BECAUSE THE
SOVIET UNION HAD A FEW WEEKS AGO PUT FORWARD A DRAFT TREATY
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"SO ONE-SIDED AS TO BE COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE TO THE UNITED

STATES." OTHERS WHO KNOW ABOUT IT CONFIRM THE JACKSON REMARKS.

THE SALT TALKS, KNOWN AS SALT II, ARE NOW IN RECESS WITH NO AGREED DATE FOR RESUMPTION. IT IS CONCEDED ALL AROUND THAT SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER, THE KEY MAN ON THE AMERICAN SIDE, IS TOO PREOCCUPIED WITH OTHER MORE PRESSING ISSUES TO PAY SUFFICIENT ATTENTION TO SALT.

THERE IS ONE CHIEF REASON, FROM THE AMERICAN POINT OF VIEW, FOR PRESSING NEGOTIATIONS AT THIS TIME: THE OUTSIDE POSSIBILITY THAT A CURB COULD BE AGREED UPON ON THE DEPLOYMENT OF MIRVS THE MULTIPLE NUCLEAR WARHEADS ON LAND-AND SEABASED MISSILES. THE UNITED STATES NOW HAS A THREE-TO-ONE LEAD IN THE NUMBER OF WARHEADS BECAUSE THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN MIRVING ITS MISSILES. THE SOVIET UNION, ACCORDING TO DEFENSE SECRETARY JAMES SCHLESINGER, NOW IS TESTING ITS OWN MULTIPLE WARHEADS BUT, AT BEST, IT WOULD TAKE UNTIL 1979 TO CATCH UP. MEANWHILE MOSCOW, ACCORDING TO JACKSON, HAS TESTED NEW INTERCONTINENTAL MISSILES, BOTH LAND-AND SEA-BASED, "DESPITE THE FACT THAT THEY ALREADY ENJOY A THREE-FOLD ADVANTAGE" IN THE THROW WEIGHT OF THEIR MISSILES, THAT IS, IN THE TOTAL MEGATONNAGE THEY COULD HURL AT THE UNITED STATES.

COLUMNIST JOSEPH ALSOP HAS BEEN REPORTING WHAT OTHERS CONSIDER THE "WORST CASE" POSSIBILITY OF THE SOVIET DEVELOPMENTS, WITH ARMAGEDDON APPEARING TO BE THE INEVITABLE OUTCOME. EVEN SOME OF THE HARDEST OF THE HARDLINERS ON THE AMERICAN SIDE OF SALT CONSIDER THAT ALSOP HAS OVERSTATED THE CASE. THOSE WHO FOUGHT HARDEST FOR THE SALT I ACCORDS CONSIDER ALSOP TO BE RAISING ALL SORTS OF FALSE ALARMS.

THE TRUTH, AS IN SO MANY PAST ARMS CONTROL CONTROVERSIES, IS HARD TO GET AT BECAUSE TRUTH IS RELATIVE AND THERE ARE MANY ASYMMETRIES BETWEEN THE TWO SUPERPOWERS. I THINK IT IS FAIR TO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT WHAT HAS OCCURRED IN THE SALT II TALKS, CONSIDERED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE LARGER SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP, HAS TAKEN THE BLOOM OFF THE ROSE FOR PRACTICALLY ALL AMERICANS WHO FOLLOW OR UNCLASSIFIED

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PARTICIPATE IN THESE MATTERS.

FROM THIS OVERALL VIEW A GOOD MANY PEOPLE ARE COMING TO THE CONCLUSION, ONE I STRONGLY SHARE, THAT FOR THE TIME BEING SALT *HOULD BE PUT ON THE SHELF. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT THE TALKS SHOULD NOT GO ON OR THAT CONTRACT SHOULD NOT CONTINUE BUT THAT THE TIME IS NOT NOW RIPE FOR STRIKING BARGAINS IN ORDER TO GET A SALT II ACCORD.

IN THE FIRST PLACE, THE CONTROL OF MIRVS IS PROBABLY IMPOSSIBLE. SOME ARGUE THAT THERE IS STILL A CHANCE OF THIS BY AN AGREEMENT TO LIMIT TESTING AND THAT SINCE TESTING CAN BE CHECKED BY SO-CALLED "NATIONAL MEANS OF DETECTION" THIS WOULD BE AN ACCEPTABLE RISK. BUT, TO ME, THE PREPONDERANT EVIDENCE IS OTHERWISE: THE SOVIETS WILL NOT AGREE TO MIRV CONTROLS UNTIL THEY REACH PARITY IN SUCH DEVICES AND THEN NO "NATIONAL MEANS" CAN EVER MAKE CERTAIN THERE WILL BE NO CHEATING.

IN THE SECOND PLACE, IN THE JUDGMENT OF A NUMBER OF PERSONS WHOSE OPINION I RESPECT THE BALANCE OF POWER IS NOT IN DANGER OF CHANGING TO A DEGREE THAT WOULD IMPERIL THE SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES. IT IS THIS POINT, OF COURSE, THAT MEN SUCH AS JACKSON AND ALSOP DO NOT ACCEPT. THE ADMINISTRATION POSITION APPEARS TO BE THAT WHILE THERE IS A LONGER RANGE THREAT THAT CANNOT BE IGNORED. BUT THE TIME ELEMENT THAT MAY BE INVOLVED IS NOT EASY TO AGREE UPON.

AT LEAST, IT APPEARS, THE PROBLEM IS NOT GOING TO BECOME CRITICAL IN THE REMAINING THREE YEARS AND A MONTH OF THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION--AND THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT TIME SPAN. THE SIMPLE FACT, TO ME, IS THAT PRESIDENT NIXON, ASSUMING HE SURVIVES FOR THE REST OF HIS TERM, IS IN SUCH A WEAK POSITION THAT THIS WOULD BE THE WORST POSSIBLE TIME FOR HIM TO BARGAIN A SALT AGREEMENT. THOSE WHO RECALL--MANY WITH UNHAPPINESS--THE FRENETIC LAST HOURS OF THE NIXON-BREZHNEV BARGAINING OVER SALT I DURING THE MOSCOW SUMMIT CONFERENCE SAY THEY DO NOT WANT TO SEE THE UNITED STATES AGAIN PLACED UNDER SUCH PRESSURE. IT NOW SEEMS BEYOND CONTRADICTION THAT THE UNITED STATES MADE CONCESSIONS TO ENABLE MR. NIXON TO COME HOME WITH HIS TRIUMPH--THAT PROBABLY COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED IN A UNCLASSIFIED

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LESS HECTIC FINALE TO THE NEGOTIATIONS.

IT IS SOME OF THOSE CONCESSIONS TO WHICH JACKSON HAS TAKEN SUCH STRONG EXCEPTION, AND BECAUSE OF THEM HE MANAGED TO PUT THROUGH CONGRESS THE SO-CALLED JACKSON AMENDMENT DEMANDING WHAT HE CONSIDERS MORE "PARITY" IN THE SECOND ROUND OF TALKS ON CONTROL AND LIMITATION OF OFFENSIVE WEAPONS.

THE LARGER SOVIET-AMERICAN FRAMEWORK ADDS WHAT TO ME IS A CONVINCING ARGUMENT FOR NOT RUSHING INTO A SALT II PACT. THE SOVIET-AMERICAN DETENTE QUITE EVIDENTLY HAS A LOT OF SOFT SPOTS, SUCH AS IN THE AREAS OF ENERGY TRADE AND THE MIDEAST. THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE IS IN GREATER DISARRAY THAN EVER, EVEN MORE THAN AFTER THE SUEZ WAR. THERE IS SIMPLY NO REASON TO TRY TO RESOLVE SALT BEFORE WE RE-

SOLVE THESE MORE PRESSING PROBLEMS. THIS ADMINISTRATION
MUST TRY TO MEET THE ENERGY AND ALLIANCE ISSUES; SALT
CAN WAIT FOR THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION. (END TEXT) RUSH

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